

senior Senator from West Virginia, too, is celebrating a birthday very soon; I believe tomorrow is the day. On behalf of the entire Senate family, I wish him a very happy birthday and many more. He sets a standard of public service to which we all aspire. I am delighted to give him the greetings of the Senate this evening in the hope that he will enjoy a very happy birthday with his family.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, if the distinguished Senator will yield?

Ms. COLLINS. I am happy to yield to the Senator.

Mr. BYRD. I am very grateful for her overly generous and charitable remarks. May I say in kind to her:

The hours are like a string of pearls,
The days like diamonds rare,
The moments are the threads of gold,
That bind them for our wear,
So may the years that come to you
Such health and good contain
That every moment, hour, and day
Be like a golden chain.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Ms. COLLINS. I thank the Senator for his beautiful poetry and his kind wishes.

DUGGER MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS ACT OF 1999

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the consideration of H.R. 2632, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2632) to designate certain Federal lands in the Talladega National Forest in the State of Alabama as the Dugger Mountain Wilderness.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Ms. COLLINS. I ask unanimous consent the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 2632) was read the third time and passed.

FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE ACT OF 1999

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Finance Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 1802, and the Senate then proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1802) to amend part E of title IV of the Social Security Act to provide the States with more funding and greater flexibility in carrying out programs designed to

help children make the transition from foster care to self-sufficiency, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

AMENDMENT NO. 2797

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I offer a substitute amendment on behalf of myself, Senator ROTH, and Senator MOYNIHAN. It is at the desk. I ask for its consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Maine [Ms. COLLINS], for herself, Mr. ROTH, Mr. MOYNIHAN, Mr. L. CHAFEE, and Mr. REED, proposes an amendment numbered 2797.

(The text of the amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Amendments Submitted.")

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the amendment be agreed to.

The amendment (No. 2797) was agreed to.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I am delighted to offer the substitute amendment on this legislation on behalf of myself, Senator ROBB, and Senator MOYNIHAN. This amendment is also cosponsored by Senators CHAFEE, BREAUX, JEFFORDS, KENNEDY, REED, GRAHAM, SNOWE, GORTON, FEINSTEIN, GREGG, LANDRIEU, BOND, LEVIN, and KERRY. It is a revised version of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, which our beloved friend and late colleague, Senator John Chafee of Rhode Island, first introduced with Senator ROCKEFELLER earlier this year.

I particularly commend the chairman and the ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee, Senator ROTH and Senator MOYNIHAN, for their leadership in negotiating and clearing this important bill so it could be sent to the President this year. Both have been long-time advocates for the well-being of foster children.

I also know Senator John Chafee would be so pleased that his son, LINC, is carrying on his efforts to help the well-being of foster children.

I thank the majority leader and the assistant majority leader for all of their work in helping us to bring this very important legislation to the Senate floor before we adjourn.

This legislation was very dear to the heart of Senator John Chafee. He recognized it as a rare opportunity to provide needed assistance to one of our Nation's most vulnerable groups, children in foster care programs. Senator Chafee was well known as a guardian of the rights of children, and he had a particular soft spot in his heart for children in foster care programs. He was a fierce advocate on their behalf.

It was tremendously important to Senator Chafee that we complete consideration of this legislation this year. This is why I am so proud this evening to be able to offer the substitute

amendment as a tribute to Senator Chafee and to this commitment to help teenagers who are "aging out" of foster care.

Let me explain exactly what that means. Although practices vary from State to State, many foster children find themselves at risk of homelessness and being uninsured when they reach their 18th birthday. The families caring for them lose their financial assistance and the children themselves lose their health insurance coverage under the Medicaid program.

This can occur, even if the child is still in high school, even if the child has not yet graduated but has turned 18. Each year about 20,000 teenagers are forced to leave the foster care system simply because they have reached the age of 18. The legislation we are considering this evening will help remedy this very serious problem. It is similar to legislation that has already overwhelming passed the House of Representatives.

Among other things, the legislation renames the independent living programs for older foster children to be John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. The legislation doubles the funding for States to assist young people in making the transition from foster care to independent living. It will double the funding from \$70 million to \$140 million a year.

The bill also provides access to needed health and mental health services for the teenagers who are "aging out" of foster care by encouraging States to extend Medicaid coverage to these young people until they reach the age of 21. Moreover, the legislation recognizes our moral obligation to provide special help for young people, age 18 to 21, who have left the foster care program.

The last hearing that Senator Chafee chaired was on the issue of foster care teenagers. I remember his discussing with me how deeply moved he was by a teenage girl who had to finish high school while living in a homeless shelter.

This legislation will help prevent these kinds of tragedies by requiring States to use some portion of their funds under the new John Chafee Independent Program for room and board for 18- to 21-year-olds who have left foster care. At the same time, the legislation also gives States greater flexibility in designing their independent living programs.

Senator Chafee and Senator ROCKEFELLER brought together a lot of these older foster children to meet with a number of us who were interested in hearing their stories. We heard incredible hardships of teenagers who were trying to finish high school while coping with medical problems and the loss of their foster homes. One of them was living in laundromats, was brushing her teeth at a McDonald's, was trying